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SPIDER-MAN®
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THE LAST STAND
4 of 4

PREVIOUSLY IN SPIDER-MAN

"LAST STAND"

PART IV OF IV

Incarcerated and exposed as the Green Goblin, Norman Osborn vowed he would have his revenge upon Spider-Man. Their game raised to new and more dangerous levels, Norman has attacked Peter Parker where he's most vulnerable and now threatens to shatter his private life forever before a brainwashed Doctor Octopus eventually catches up with him. Aunt May was kidnapped three months ago, her disappearance used to provoke Peter into crossing all the lines he swore he would never cross in an effort to stay one step ahead of his revamped gallery of villains. Now Osborn, sprung from prison by Spider-Man himself, threatens the life of Mary Jane Parker in a grisly echo of Gwen Stacy's murder. Will Spider-Man's wife meet the same fate as his first love, or will the Goblin die again tonight?

WRITER	ARTISTS	COLORIST	LETTERER
MARK MILLAR	TERRY & RACHEL DODSON	AVALON'S IAN HANNIN	VC's CORY PETIT

COVER	ASSOC. EDITOR	EDITOR	CHIEF	PUBLISHER
TERRY & RACHEL DODSON	WARREN SIMONS	AXEL ALONSO	JOE QUESADA	DAN BUCKLEY

Marvel Knights Spider-Man No. 12, May. 2005. Published Monthly by MARVEL COMICS, a division of MARVEL ENTERTAINMENT GROUP, INC. OFFICE OF PUBLICATION: 10 East 40th Street, New York, NY 10016.

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$2.99 per copy in the U.S. and $4.25 in Canada (GST #R127032852) in the direct market and $2.99 per copy in the U.S. and $4.25 in Canada (GST #R127032852) through the newsstand; Canadian Agreement #40668537. **Printed in the USA.** AVI ARAD, Chief Creative Officer; ALAN FINE, President & CEO Of Toy Biz and Marvel Publishing; DAN CARR, Director of Production; ELAINE CALLENDER, Director of Manufacturing; DAVID BOGART, Managing Editor; STAN LEE, Chairman Emeritus. For information regarding advertising in Marvel Comics or on Marvel.com, please contact Joe Maimone, Advertising Director, at jmaimone@marvel.com or 212-576-8534.

THE LAST STAND
PART FOUR OF FOUR
THINK YOU'LL MISS MARY JANE AS MUCH AS YOU'VE MISSED GWEN, SPIDER-MAN?
I PICKED A NEW BRIDGE JUST FOR HER, YOU KNOW.
MARK MILLAR WRITER
TERRY AND RACHEL DODSON ARTISTS
VC'S CORY PETIT LETTERS
AVALON'S IAN HANNIN COLORS
WARREN SIMONS ASSOCIATE EDITOR
AXEL ALONSO EDITOR
JOE QUESADA EDITOR IN CHIEF
DAN BUCKLEY PUBLISHER

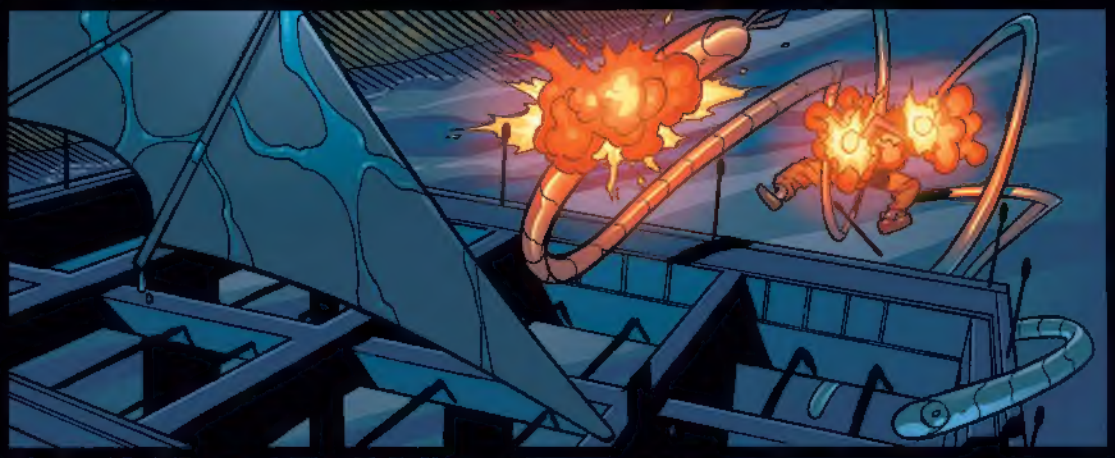
OSBORN, PLEASE, YOU'RE FIFTY-FIVE YEARS OLD.
THIS IS INSANE.
YOU'RE A FIFTY-FIVE YEAR OLD MAN.
SAYS THE HIGH-SCHOOL TEACHER WHO DRESSES UP LIKE A SPIDER EVERY NIGHT.
I ALWAYS THOUGHT YOU'D AMOUNT TO SO MUCH MORE THAN THIS, PETER. YOU INVENTED WEB-FLUID WHEN YOU WERE A TEENAGER, FOR HEAVEN'S SAKE.
ALL THOSE BRAINS GOING TO WASTE ON THESE ADOLESCENT BRAWLS.
WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT? YOU'RE TWICE AS SMART AS I AM.
YOU COULD HAVE CURED CANCER BY NOW IF YOU HADN'T WASTED YOUR TIME WITH THIS GREEN GOBLIN CRAP!

AH, BUT THAT'S THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN YOU AND ME, PARKER--
THE DIFFERENCE IS THAT I DON'T GIVE A RAT'S ASS.

YOU'VE ALREADY KILLED AUNT MAY, OSBORN. ISN'T THAT ENOUGH?
OH, YE OF LITTLE FAITH: AUNT MAY'S JUST BEEN ANAESTHETIZED AND SLEEPING IN HER OWN MESS FOR THE LAST FEW MONTHS.
OF COURSE, SHE'LL RUN OUT OF DRUGS IN FORTY-FIVE MINUTES AND CHOKE ON HER OWN VOMIT, BUT SHE'S HARDLY DOWN AMONG THE DEAD MEN YET, YOUNG SIR.
TICK-TOCK, TICK-TOCK. THE STAKES ARE ESPECIALLY HIGH TONIGHT, SPIDER-MAN, BUT YOU ONLY HAVE YOURSELF TO BLAME.
YOU SHOULDN'T HAVE RAISED THE STAKES AND HAD ME CAPTURED AFTER ALL THESE YEARS. ANYTHING THAT HAPPENS NOW IS ENTIRELY SELF-INFLICTED.
WHAT DO I HAVE TO DO?
PICK UP EXACTLY WHERE WE LEFT OFF AFTER I ESCAPED FROM CAGE, OF COURSE: YOU FORFEITING YOUR OWN LIFE IN EXCHANGE FOR THE LIFE OF AN INNOCENT.
WHY? WHAT'S THE POINT?
WHAT'S THE POINT OF ALL THIS, NORMAN?
BECAUSE HEROES NEED VILLAINS TO KEEP THEM IN CHECK, PETER. OTHERWISE, YOU END UP WITH ANT-MAN RUNNING THE FEDERAL RESERVE.
WHY DO YOU THINK I GAVE ALL THOSE WITLESS GOONS A FACE-LIFT? WHY DO YOU THINK I HELPED TO INSTALL THE OWL WHERE THE KINGPIN USED TO SIT?

WHAT?
WHAT ARE YOU LOOKING AT?

OCTAVIUS! NO!!
UNGH!
Mary Jane--
KILL NORMAN OSBORN. KILL NORMAN OSBORN BY MIDNIGHT TONIGHT...
Doc Ock's brainwashed. Moving like he's fighting underwater. Doesn't stand a chance against the Goblin while Norman's in such unbelievable FORM.
OH, SHUT UP AND DIE, IDIOT. YOU'RE ONLY MAKING A FOOL OF YOURSELF.

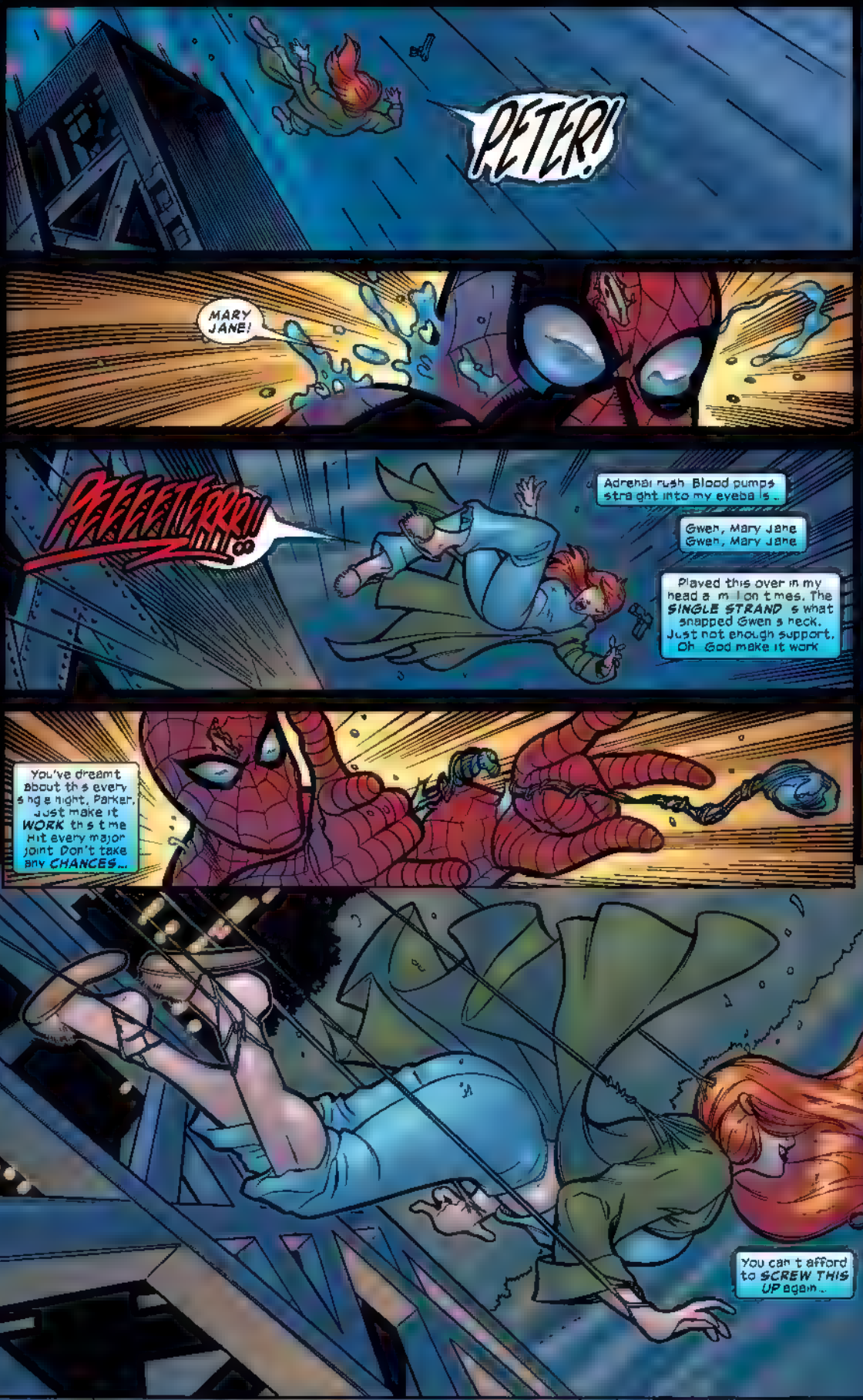


OSBORN!
WHUH--?

STOP LAUGHING.

SNAK!
He tells me it cost him a THOUSAND BUCKS. A thousand bucks to some down-at-the-heel mystic to stop the psychics from locating Aunt May's WHEREABOUTS.
I'll never find her, he chokes and snorts. No matter how hard I hit him, he'll never tell me where she is in time for me to SAVE her.
PETER?
WHAT'S HAPPENING? WHERE DID HE--?
PETER!!
OH, PAY ATTENTION, PARKER!

THIS IS A BIG ONE TONIGHT-- ONE OF THOSE EPIC FIGHTS WHERE SOMEBODY DIES--AND TONIGHT THAT SOMEBODY'S DEAR, OLD MAY.
IT DOESN'T MATTER WHO WINS HERE. YOU KNOW I'LL ONLY RISE FROM THE GRAVE AND WASTE YOUR TIME JUST LIKE SUPER-VILLAINS ARE SUPPOSED TO DO.
EITHER ME OR SOME CHEAP KNOCK-OFF WILL COME BACK AND HAUNT YOU AND STOP YOU DOING ANYTHING USEFUL WITH YOUR LIFE.
HEY, GENIUS!
WHA--?
BANG! BANG!
EAT THIS--
--AAOOWW!


PETER!
MARY JANE!
PEEEETERRR!!
Adrenal rush. Blood pumps straight into my eyeballs.
Gwen, Mary Jane Gwen, Mary Jane
Played this over in my head a million times. The SINGLE STRAND is what snapped Gwen's neck. Just not enough support. Oh God make it work
You've dreamt about this every single night, Parker. Just make it WORK this time. Hit every major joint. Don't take any CHANCES...
You can't afford to SCREW THIS UP again...

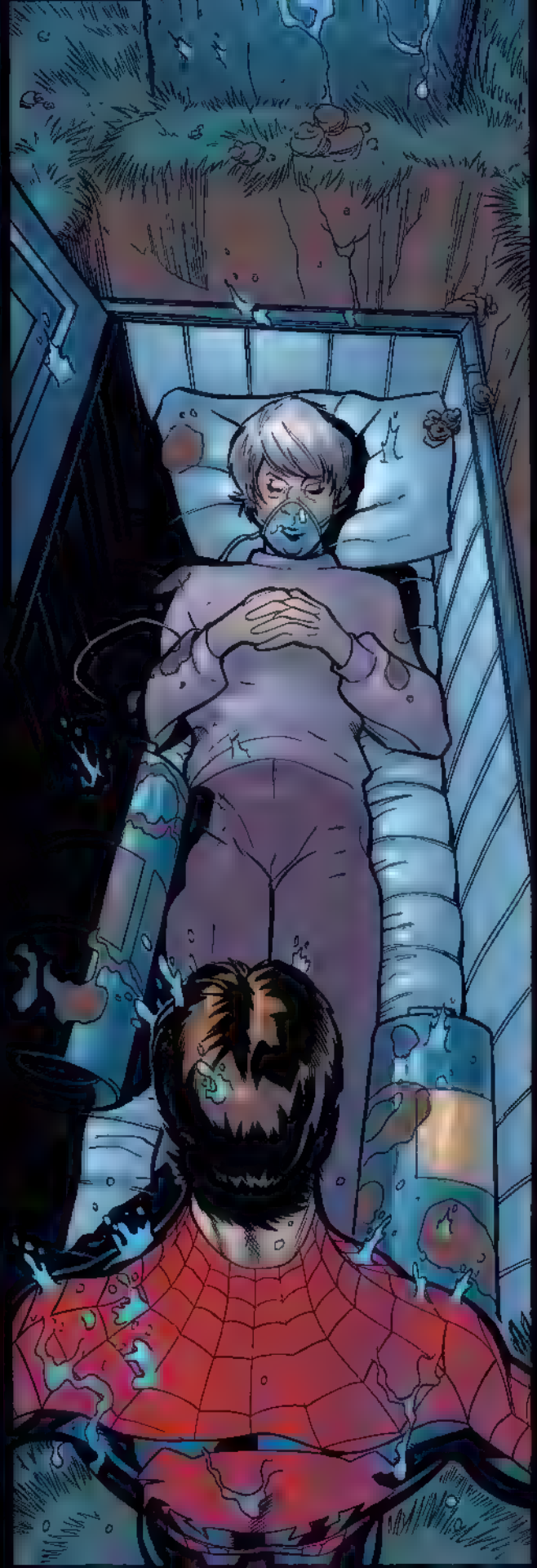
PETER!!!
Oh, thank God
YOU THINK YOU'RE GETTING A HAPPY ENDING HERE, PARKER? YOU THINK I HAVEN'T GOT A *MILLION* PLANS AND COUNTER-PLANS?
THIRTY-ONE MINUTES AND MAY PARKER RUNS OUT OF *OXYGEN*, INSECT I'M TAKING A *BITE* OUT OF YOUR LIFE TONIGHT *NO MATTER WHAT.*
NORMAN, SHUT UP.
YOU WON'T *BELIEVE* HOW MUCH THIS HURTS!

OSBORN! GOT TO KILL OSBORN!
OCTAVIUS! WHAT ARE YOU DOING? RELEASE ME THIS INSTANT!
GOT TO...
I'LL BURY THIS THING IN YOUR HEAD, YOU FAT...!

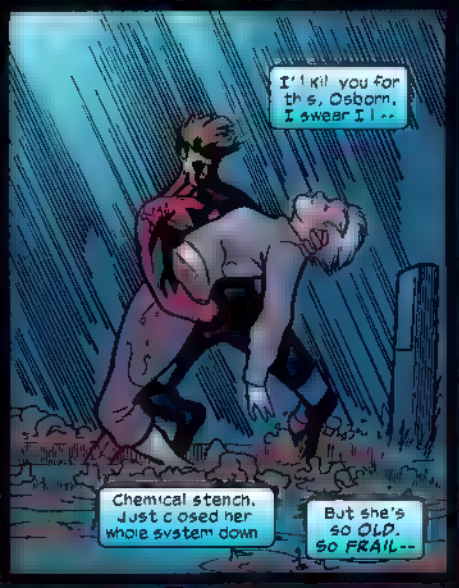
OSBORN!

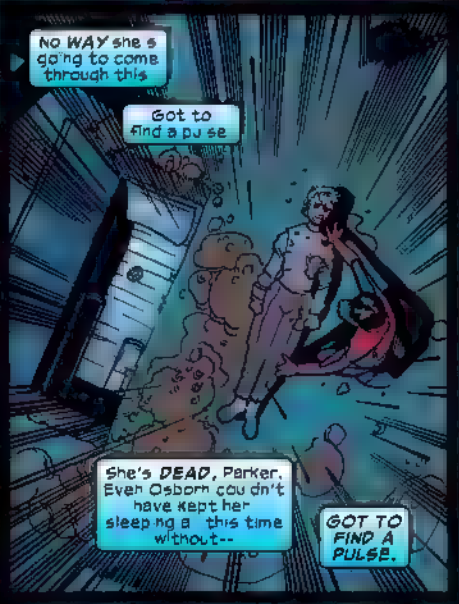
WE ARE NEVER DOING THIS AGAIN, YOU HEAR ME? TONIGHT THIS ALL STOPS WE ARE *NEVER* DOING THIS AGAIN.
WHAT ABOUT MAY? DID YOU--?
I FAILED, MJ. THIRTY MINUTES AND SHE'LL BE *DEAD*. THIRTY MINUTES, BUT SHE COULD BE ANYWHERE IN THE *CITY*.
HE'S GOT EVERY BASE *COVERED*, THE LOUSY--
WHAT?
I KNOW WHERE SHE *IS*!
WHAT?
STAY HERE! THE POLICE ARE ON THEIR WAY!

There was NEW TURF over the grave. Why was there new turf a over Jnc e Ben's grave if they were just rep ac ng a HEADSTONE?
"I think you've buried ENOUGH friends, Spider-Man."
That vis on MARVEL GIRL had What if she was just OFF BASE? What if she just cou dn't get a p cture and the tombstone she saw d dn't mean Aunt May was dead?
Osborn said he had someone shie d her whereabouts. What if th s was just where he was HOLDING her?
"...enough dead friends to fi a cemetery by YOURSELF."
Oh dear God..
"May s just been anaesthet zed and s eep ng n her own mess for the ast few months"
Why not? Osborn's one of the world's eading b ochemists
"She' l run out of drugs in forty-five m nutes and choke on her own vom t.."
Osborn, you're a MONSTER.
"T ck-Tock Tick-Tock"
"...she's hardly down among the dead men young s r"
"Down among the DEAD men"



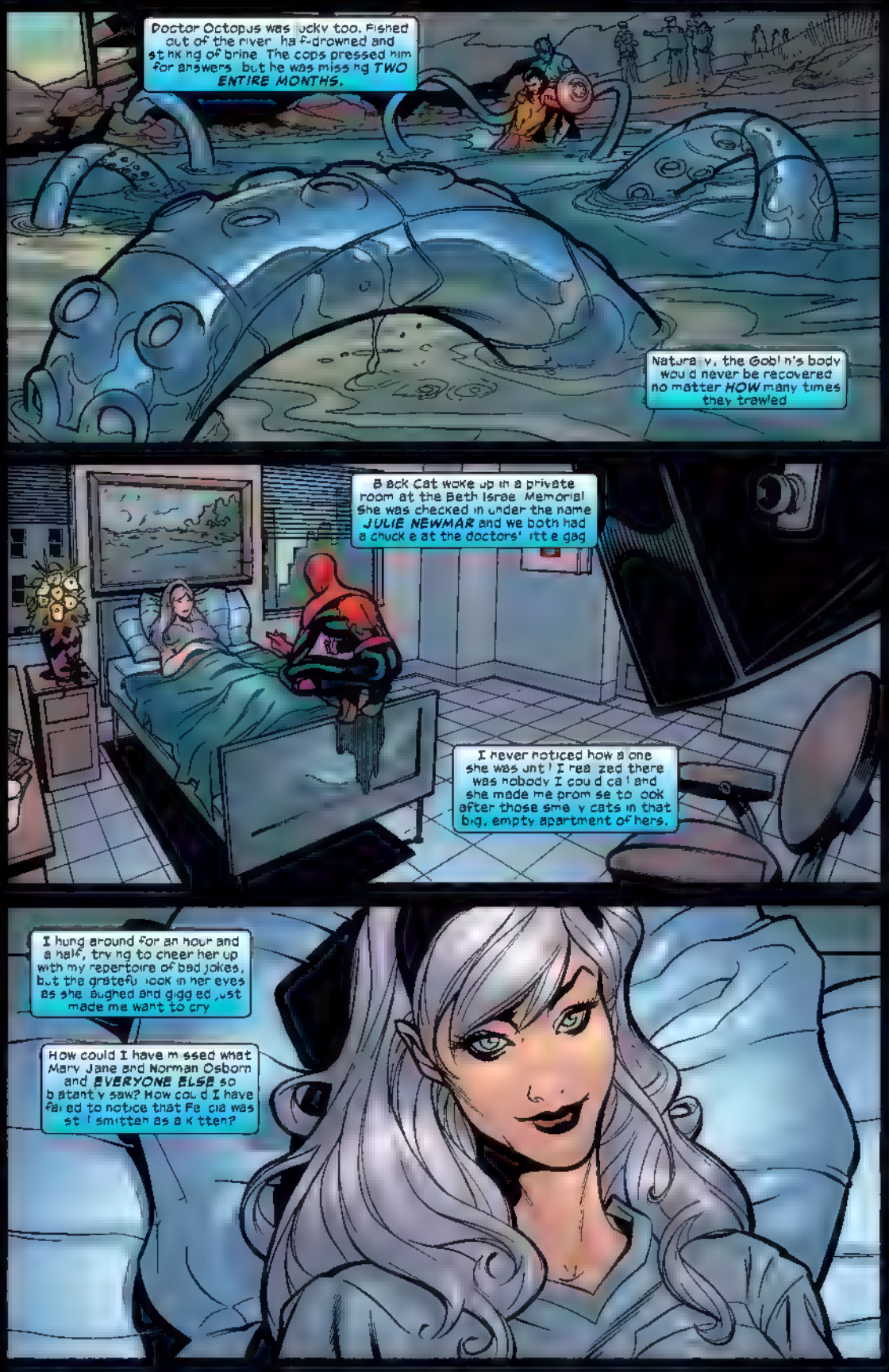
AUNT MAY...?

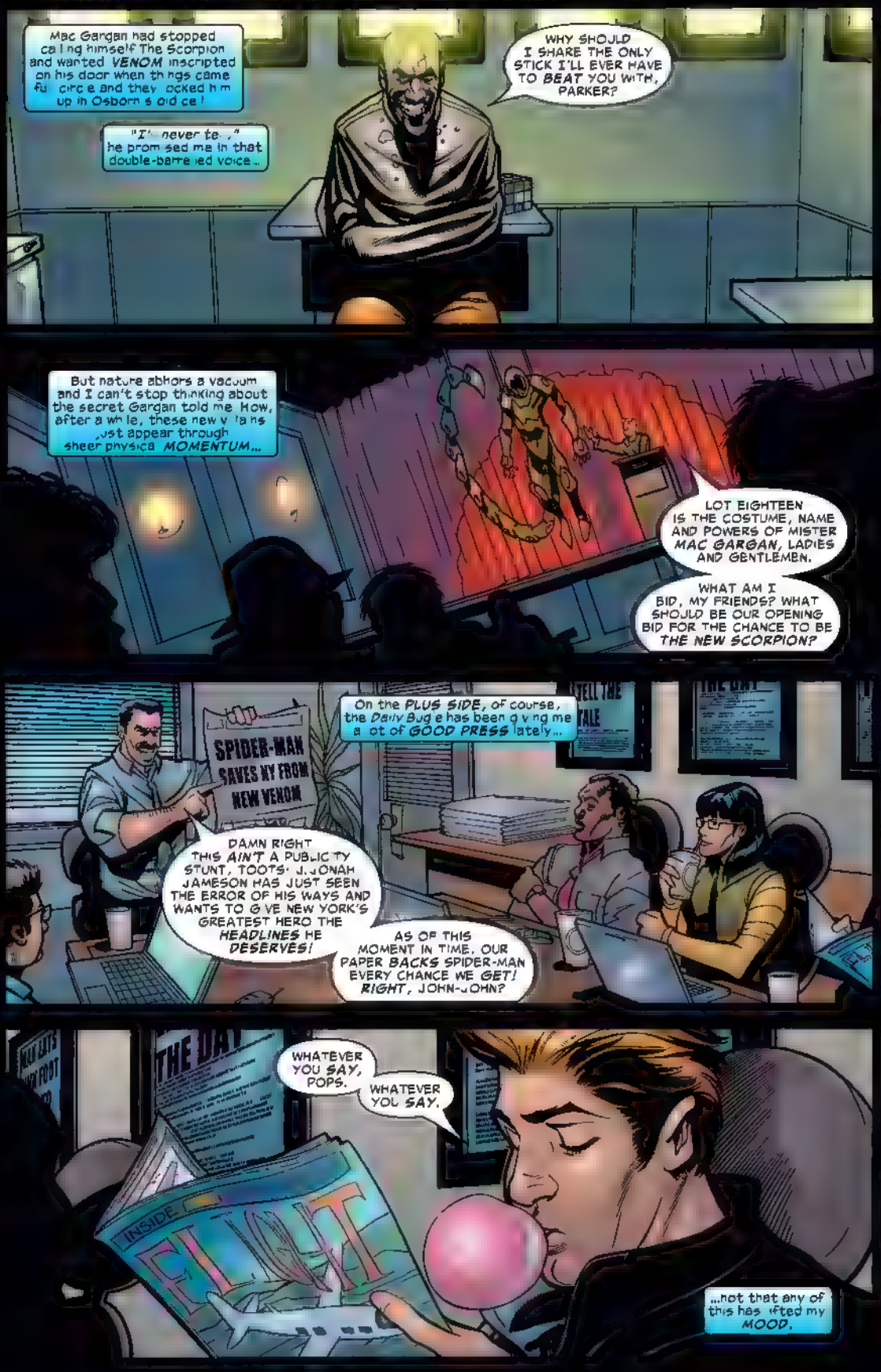

I'll kill you for this, Osborn. I swear I'll--
Chemical stench. Just closed her whole system down
But she's so OLD. So FRAIL--

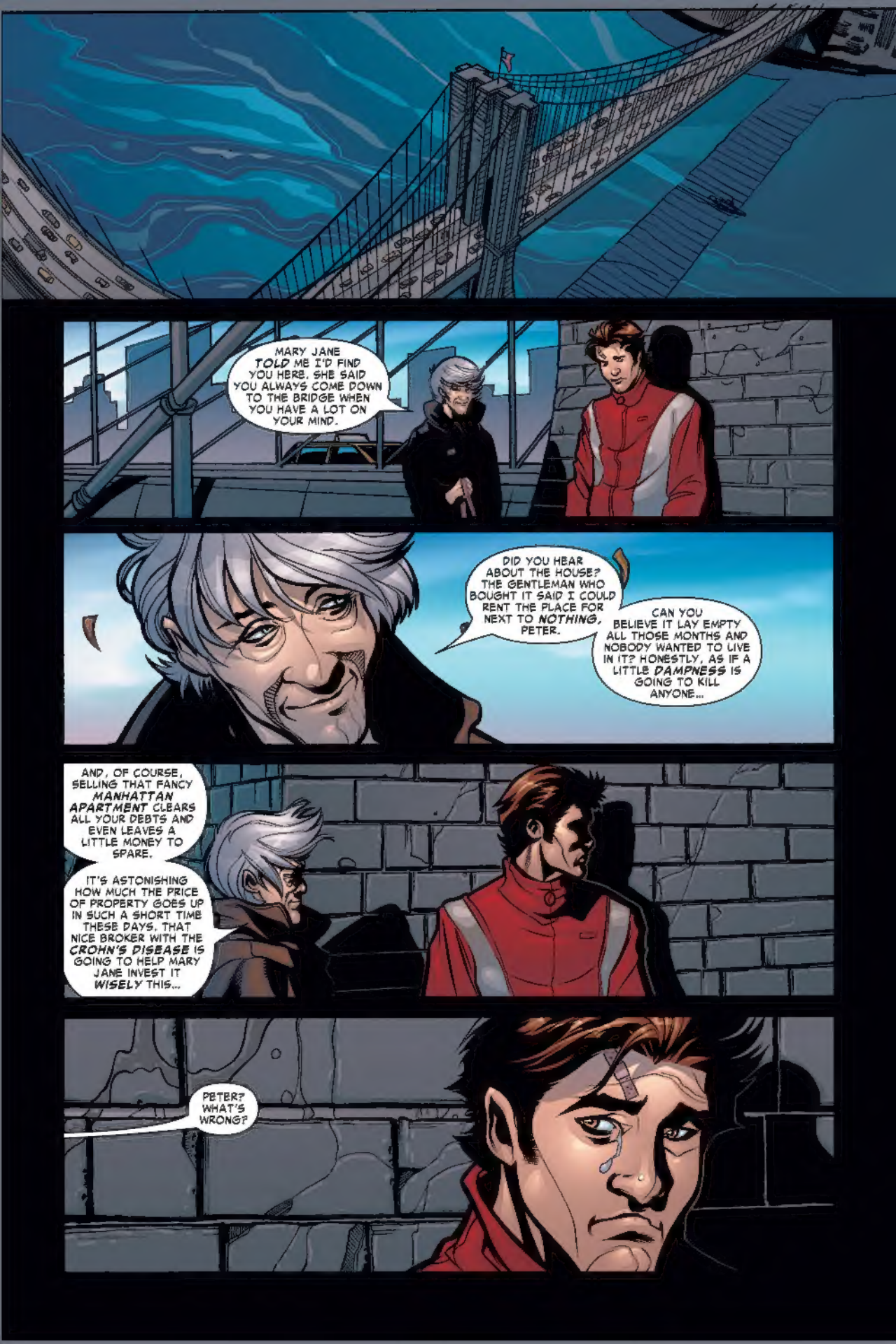

NO WAY she's going to come through this
Got to find a pulse
She's DEAD, Parker. Even Osborn couldn't have kept her sleeping a this time without--
GOT TO FIND A PULSE.

NO!!!
HUKKK--
KKUWW--
KAFF!
PETER?

LUCKY, Parker LUCKY itt e foo .

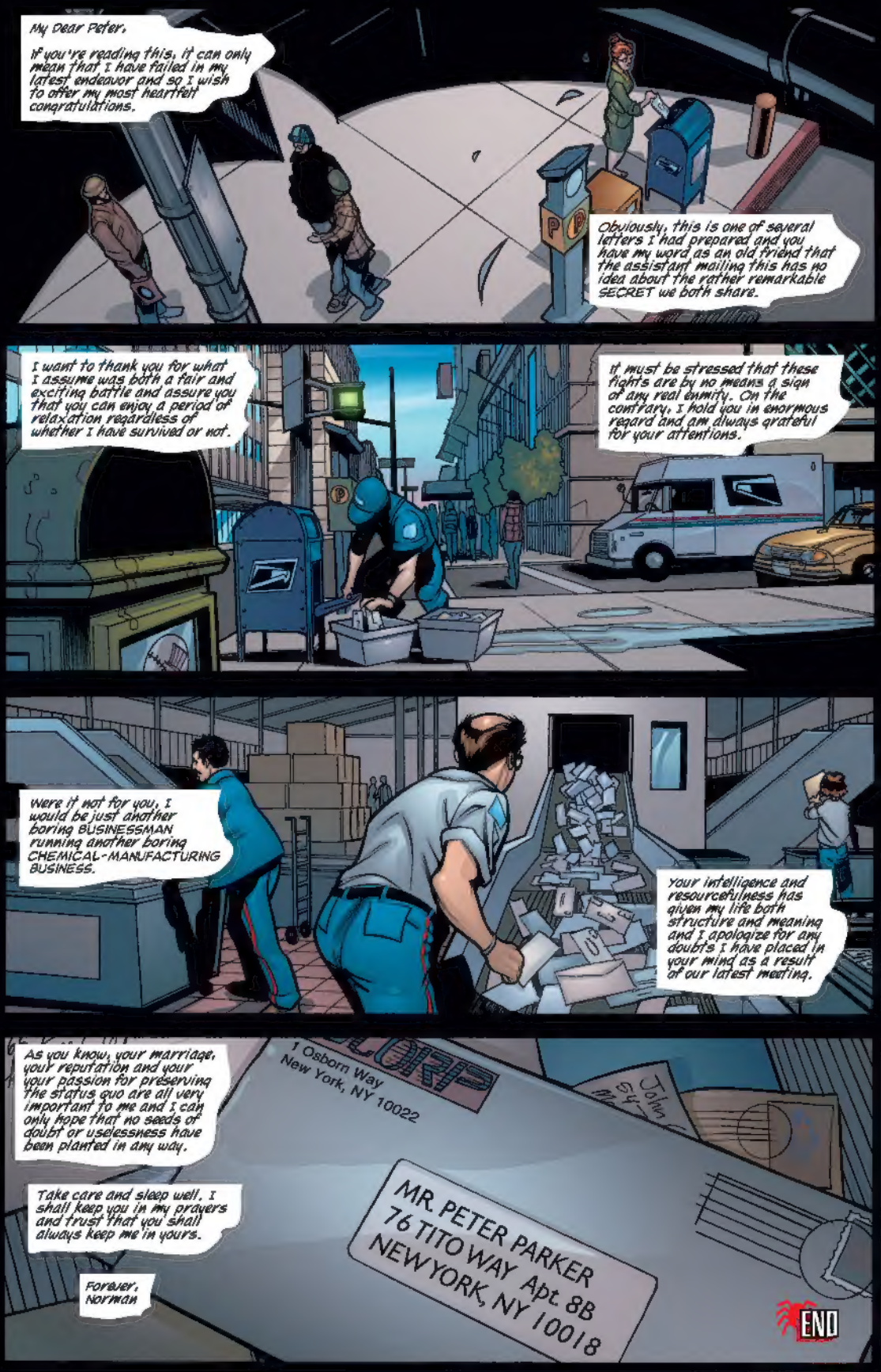

Doctor Octopus was lucky too. Fished out of the river half-drowned and stinking of brine. The cops pressed him for answers, but he was missing TWO ENTIRE MONTHS.
Naturally, the Goblin's body would never be recovered no matter HOW many times they trawled
Black Cat woke up in a private room at the Beth Israel Memorial. She was checked in under the name JULIE NEWMAR and we both had a chuckle at the doctors' little gag
I never noticed how alone she was until I realized there was nobody I could call and she made me promise to look after those smelly cats in that big, empty apartment of hers.
I hung around for an hour and a half, trying to cheer her up with my repertoire of bad jokes, but the grateful look in her eyes as she laughed and giggled just made me want to cry
How could I have missed what Mary Jane and Norman Osborn and EVERYONE ELSE so blatantly saw? How could I have failed to notice that Felicia was still smitten as a kitten?


Mac Gargan had stopped calling himself The Scorpion and wanted VENOM inscripted on his door when things came full circle and they locked him up in Osborn's old cell!
"I've never tell," he promised me in that double-barreled voice...
WHY SHOULD I SHARE THE ONLY STICK I'LL EVER HAVE TO BEAT YOU WITH, PARKER?
But nature abhors a vacuum and I can't stop thinking about the secret Gargan told me. How, after a while, these new villains just appear through sheer physical MOMENTUM...
LOT EIGHTEEN IS THE COSTUME, NAME AND POWERS OF MISTER MAC GARGAN, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN.
WHAT AM I BID, MY FRIENDS? WHAT SHOULD BE OUR OPENING BID FOR THE CHANCE TO BE THE NEW SCORPION?
SPIDER-MAN SAVES NY FROM NEW VENOM
On the PLUS SIDE, of course, the Daily Bugle has been giving me a lot of GOOD PRESS lately...
DAMN RIGHT THIS AIN'T A PUBLICITY STUNT, TOOTS! J. JONAH JAMESON HAS JUST SEEN THE ERROR OF HIS WAYS AND WANTS TO GIVE NEW YORK'S GREATEST HERO THE HEADLINES HE DESERVES!
AS OF THIS MOMENT IN TIME, OUR PAPER BACKS SPIDER-MAN EVERY CHANCE WE GET! RIGHT, JOHN-JOHN?
WHATEVER YOU SAY, POPS.
WHATEVER YOU SAY.
INSIDE
...not that any of this has lifted my MOOD.


MARY JANE TOLD ME I'D FIND YOU HERE. SHE SAID YOU ALWAYS COME DOWN TO THE BRIDGE WHEN YOU HAVE A LOT ON YOUR MIND.
DID YOU HEAR ABOUT THE HOUSE? THE GENTLEMAN WHO BOUGHT IT SAID I COULD RENT THE PLACE FOR NEXT TO NOTHING, PETER.
CAN YOU BELIEVE IT LAY EMPTY ALL THOSE MONTHS AND NOBODY WANTED TO LIVE IN IT? HONESTLY, AS IF A LITTLE DAMPNESS IS GOING TO KILL ANYONE...
AND, OF COURSE, SELLING THAT FANCY MANHATTAN APARTMENT CLEARS ALL YOUR DEBTS AND EVEN LEAVES A LITTLE MONEY TO SPARE.
IT'S ASTONISHING HOW MUCH THE PRICE OF PROPERTY GOES UP IN SUCH A SHORT TIME THESE DAYS. THAT NICE BROKER WITH THE CROHN'S DISEASE IS GOING TO HELP MARY JANE INVEST IT WISELY THIS...
PETER? WHAT'S WRONG?

I'M SORRY, AUNT MAY. YOU JUST SHOULDN'T BE LIVING IN A RAMSHACKLE OLD HOUSE WHERE THE INSIDE OF THE WINDOWS STILL *FROST UP* IN THE WINTER.
I SHOULD BE *LOOKING AFTER* YOU. I SHOULD BE MAKING *MORE MONEY* THAN THIS. I WAS *SUPPOSED* TO BE *SMART*...
OH, BUT YOU *ARE* SMART, PETER. YOU'RE THE *SMARTEST BOY* I'VE EVER *MET*.
AND YOU'RE DOING A JOB THAT MEANS A LOT MORE THAN *MAKING MONEY*. YOU'RE SHAPING CHILDREN'S *FUTURES* IN THAT SCHOOL...
...NOT TO MENTION WHAT YOU DO AS *SPIDER-MAN* EVERY NIGHT.
ALL SPIDER-MAN DOES IS *SELL NEWSPAPERS*, AUNT MAY. OSBORN SAID IT HIMSELF...IT'S JUST A WAY OF MAKING SURE I DON'T DO ANYTHING OF ANY *REAL* SIGNIFICANCE.
PETER, YOU SAVE LIVES *EVERY DAY*.
HAVE YOU ANY IDEA HOW MANY *PEOPLE* YOU'VE SAVED AS SPIDER-MAN? I LOOKED IT UP ON THE INTERNET AND IT WAS OVER *TEN THOUSAND*.
TEN THOUSAND PEOPLE *DIRECTLY*, PETER. THAT'S NOT EVEN COUNTING ALL THE *BOMBS* YOU'VE DEACTIVATED OR THE THINGS YOU'VE DONE WITH THE AVENGERS OR THE FANTASTIC FOUR.
ON WHAT PLANET IS ANY OF THAT *INSIGNIFICANT*?
IF IT WASN'T FOR SPIDER-MAN YOU'D NEVER HAVE BEEN *KIDNAPPED*, AUNT MAY. I JUST CAN'T RISK ANYTHING LIKE THAT EVER HAPPENING AGAIN...

AND IF IT WASN'T FOR SPIDER-MAN I'D NEVER HAVE BEEN *RESCUED*.
DON'T LET OSBORN GET HIS FINGERS IN YOUR MIND. HE'S A HORRIBLE, DREADFUL PERSON AND THE ONLY THING HE *LIVES* FOR IS MAKING YOU FEEL *BAD* ABOUT YOURSELF.
HERE... I BROUGHT YOU A LITTLE GIFT...
WHAT'S THIS?
SOMETHING WARM TO WEAR UNDER YOUR CLOTHES WITH ALL THIS *BAD WEATHER* NEW YORK'S BEEN HAVING LATELY.
NOW COME ALONG HOME AND STOP BEING SILLY. MARY JANE *SAID* YOU THROW A HISSY-FIT ABOUT THIS JOB EVERY COUPLE OF YEARS, BUT YOU EVENTUALLY *SEE SENSE* AGAIN.
I'VE GOT YOUR FAVORITE *WHEATCAKES* IN THE OVEN AND THEY SHOULD BE JUST ABOUT *DONE* BY NOW.
Verizon


My Dear Peter,
If you're reading this, it can only mean that I have failed in my latest endeavor and so I wish to offer my most heartfelt congratulations.
Obviously, this is one of several letters I had prepared and you have my word as an old friend that the assistant mailing this has no idea about the rather remarkable SECRET we both share.
I want to thank you for what I assume was both a fair and exciting battle and assure you that you can enjoy a period of relaxation regardless of whether I have survived or not.
It must be stressed that these fights are by no means a sign of any real enmity. On the contrary, I hold you in enormous regard and am always grateful for your attentions.
Were it not for you, I would be just another boring BUSINESSMAN running another boring CHEMICAL-MANUFACTURING BUSINESS.
Your intelligence and resourcefulness has given my life both structure and meaning and I apologize for any doubts I have placed in your mind as a result of our latest meeting.
As you know, your marriage, your reputation and your your passion for preserving the status quo are all very important to me and I can only hope that no seeds of doubt or uselessness have been planted in any way.
Take care and sleep well. I shall keep you in my prayers and trust that you shall always keep me in yours.
Forever,
Norman
1 Osborn Way
New York, NY 10022
MR. PETER PARKER
76 TITO WAY Apt. 8B
NEW YORK, NY 10018
END